

## Durham PreK Governance Committee Meeting NOTES

September 18, 2025 (9:30am-11:30am)

In-person meeting at the Jim and Carolyn Hunt Early Childhood Resource Center

### In Attendance, listed in random order:

**Voting Members:** Cathy Collie-Robinson, Wykeshia Glass, Brittany Gregory, Brenda Carter, Xavier Cason, Jason Rutherford, June Shillito, Dr. Aleksandra Holod, Michelle Lyn, Tabitha Blackwell, Dr. Deborah Pitman, Joy Spencer

**Non-voting Members:** Dr. Linda Chappel, Joy Turner, Tammorah Mathis, Monnie Griggs, Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Jameka Wells, Ileana Vick; Kate Irish, **Guests:** Karen Thompson, Tabitha Williamson, Tosh Adams, Adrienne Stephens, Nita McAdoo, Rachel Osborne, Marilyn Agostini, Maggie West, Cate Laster, Katherine Brandt

WHAT	NOTES
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome and Introductions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Cathy Collie-Robinson, Chair and Dr. Linda Chappel welcomed Governance Members</li><li>○ Introductions around the room</li><li>○ Celebration of Xavier Cason for his service on the Durham PreK Governance Committee. Many thanks for his leadership and time in support of Durham’s children. This is his last meeting as a voting member.</li><li>○ Highlighted two members of DPK Governance, Brittany Gregory and Jason Rutherford who were both interviewed for the upcoming DPK newsletter.</li><li>○ Governance also welcomed the new Durham County Early Childhood Coordinator, Ileana Vick, to our non-voting membership. In addition to other duties, Ms. Vick is the contract liaison for DPK.</li><li>○ Attendance reviewed and meeting quorum verified</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Meeting Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and Approve meeting notes from June 2025</li><li>• Receive highlights from the Opening of School year 2025-2026</li><li>• Accept Program updates</li><li>• Review data from the survey of families from the end of the 2024-2025 school year</li><li>• Receive updates from the Apprenticeship Program and the inaugural Early Educator Academy</li><li>• Recruit DPK Governance Membership</li><li>• Discuss an extended meeting in January 2026</li></ul>

*Action Item	<b>Governance unanimously approved Governance Committee meeting notes from June 2025</b> Motioned by Brittany Gregory, Seconded by Jason Rutherford, all in favor.
<b>Highlights from Opening of School year 2025-2026</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video showed highlights from the end of the 2024 – 2025 school year, the Summer 2025 and the opening of the new school term.</li> </ul>
<b>Program Updates*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seat Allocation and Enrollment             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Joy Turner reminded the group of DPK’s blended funding model. We blend program funds with NC PreK, Title I and Head Start. Slides show locally funded seats (661).                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 365 of the 661 seats are <b>DPK only</b> which means they are not funded through braided dollars- only funded by local funds. These seats would not exist without local funds.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Presentation displays a comparison of applications received over the last few years through the first week of September 2025. In 2022-2023 there was a peak in applications (first full year back after the pandemic). Since then, there was a dip in applications before an increase this year.</li> <li>○ This universal application process for preschool in Durham means that we have more than 661 seats available for children. The total number of publicly available seats includes seats fully funded by Head Start, Title I and NC PreK. These additional seats are funded completely by our partners and are not counted in the 661 seats that are funded through the braided model. Each year in November we report on the full number of public preschool seats available across all programs.</li> <li>○ We accept children’s applications year-round and do receive a significant number beyond the beginning of the school year.</li> <li>○ A slide displays the number of sites, type of seats and the changes over the past 3 years for those locally funded.</li> <li>○ For this year, the number of seats did not change significantly last school year with the increased funding payments to sites.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Preservice payments: Last year was the second year implementing the preservice payments. These are payments that sites receive at the beginning of the school year after sites sign their contracts. This is calculated at 15% of their maximum reimbursement amount. It is intended to help with cash flow at the beginning of the year because sites usually have to pay a full month of salary to staff before the school year begins and it also helps with the impact of vacancies throughout the school year.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The first year we saw increased enrollment possibly because this is an incentive for sites to help fill vacant seats and maintain enrollment. The second year we saw the same trend.</li> <li>○ Overall, we had a vacancy rate of 10% across all the locally funded seats. Whitted had significant struggles with enrollment in school year 2024-2025. If you remove that data, DPK had an overall 4% vacancy rate, which is an</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

improvement from the last few years. Reviewing sites individually, last year only one site had a vacancy rate of 15% whereas the year before we had 2 sites with that rate.

- The preservice model provided on average a 10% higher cumulative per child attendance payment than sites would have received if their payments were based on the allocation payment model used during the pandemic.
- On the meeting handouts sent in advance by email you can see a comparison of the seats that are allocated and how many vacancies each site had.
- The meeting handouts also show reimbursement totals by site. The orange line at the top is the maximum a site could receive this year, including the preservice payment, if they were fully enrolled. The first bar is what they actually received for the 24-25 school year, middle bar is what they would have received if we only paid on allocations and the last bar is what they would have received on the old model when we just paid on attendance. All but one site received a higher reimbursement rate than what they would have received under the prior reimbursement models.
- Dr. Holod asked the difference between *DPK Only* and *DPK Enhanced* seats. Joy explained that *DPK Only* are seats that only exist because of DPK local funds and *DPK Enhanced* are seats that braid funding to enhance and bring the reimbursement rate up to DPK rates (are funded by local dollars and a partner, such as NC PreK, Head Start or Title I).
  - Dr. Holod observed that the DPK Enhanced seats seem less full than DPK Only. Joy explained that the DPK Only seats have *no restrictions-no eligibility requirements* (only adding in a parent fee if the family income is over 400% of the federal poverty level). All other seats have eligibility restrictions such as income or developmental guidelines. The eligibility restrictions play a factor in enrollment numbers.
- Jason Rutherford, for the Whitted School- is that a domino from the administrative action that was received by Durham Public Schools (DPS) in 2024-25 from the Division of Child Development and Early Education? Has the admin action been resolved? Dr. Chappel, Whitted's enrollment has been up and down for the past few years. The admin action was resolved by DPS.
- Cathy Collie Robinson, the Whitted School has 90 seats, is that part of the challenge for filling the seats? Can you speak on the enrollment this year so far? Karen Thompson from DPS, we have had challenges in the past around enrollment mostly because wrap care for families was not available. DPS is offering wrap care this year with a fee for parents. We are continuing to enroll this year. Wrap care is offered to some children, we do have a cap on how many we can serve.
- Cathy, For Another Beautiful beginnings the capacity increased and for Primary Colors it decreased. Joy, yes halfway through the 2024-25 school year Primary Colors asked to relinquish 3 of their seats and those seats were moved to Another Beautiful Beginnings.
- We will continue to report on the preservice payment strategy employed by DPK. These payments are important because we heard from the sites coming out of the pandemic that they are concerned about the economic impact of vacancies. DPK sites must continue to pay the higher teacher compensation even if they do not have full enrollment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coming Soon – Student Progress Report- TSG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dr. Chappel stated that we routinely share about children’s progress in DPK. Last year we were able to come to an agreement with partner agencies to use existing data to share children’s progress. DPK is not budgeted for an external child level evaluation. North Carolina has invested over the years in external evaluations of NC PreK statewide. There are numerous reports on the impact of the NC PreK program. For DPK, we have been studying how to measure children’s progress. We have reviewed our assessment tools that are required across all public preschool programs and found we can analyze that data internally.</li> <li>○ Last year we signed data sharing agreements. The gold assessment in Teaching Strategies is used across all of our public preschool programs in Durham. The teachers are already completing these assessments. In our programs we have invested time working with teachers to make sure the assessment information is entered correctly.</li> <li>○ We gathered the data to look at growth from the Fall of 2024 to the Spring of 2025 and we committed to looking at that comparative data. We are careful to share that this data is being collected in the classroom by the teachers.</li> <li>○ No information has been released but it is coming. We are planning for that data analysis to be one piece of the report to the community so that we get the full picture of the universal preschool effort.</li> <li>○ We are reviewing where the children start at the beginning of the year and where they are at the end of the year</li> <li>○ We will share more about this at future meetings.</li> <li>○ Jameka Wells, the teachers who are completing these assessments in the classroom do have training and certification in order to do them and the Technical Assistance team works with the teachers to make sure that they maintain the certification.</li> <li>○ Cathy, I think it will be critical to let everyone know that this information is being gathered through developmentally appropriate ways and not through testing.</li> <li>○ We are not looking to compare sites. We are looking to present data that shows the progress of the children in the program.</li> <li>○ Dr. Pitman, when is the estimated end for this project. A report on the DPK program, including this data from 2024 – 2025, is due in January 2026.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Technical Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nita McAdoo shared information about the Summer Institute and directors’ meetings shown in the video. We completed training for teachers on socio-emotional health and positive behavior strategies, resilience, ASQ 3 training.</li> <li>• We are excited for professional development in 2025-2026. We are working with intentionality around math instruction. This will be our focus for the year aligning it with the Teaching Strategies Gold math objectives. Each month we will focus on a different measure. We are providing Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s). We will be surveying</li> </ul>

	<p>teachers to see how comfortable they are with math in the classroom. This will align with the focus of the annual <i>ASK Conference</i> in February 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information shared in the slide deck reviewed the capacity building technical assistance program that enrolls early education sites interested in becoming a future DPK site.</li> </ul>
<p><b>End of year survey of families from 2024-2025 school year</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys are conducted over the phone and online to try to reach as many families as possible. This year we reached about 32% of the families participating in the 2024 – 2025 school term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the data are analyzed by different demographics factors such as race, ethnicity, income and home language.</li> </ul> </li> <li>An overview of the results is displayed in the slide deck. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>92% of families said that the overall experience is good or very good. The highest income group had the lowest overall satisfaction at 89% satisfied</li> <li>95% would recommend DPK to a friend or family member.</li> <li>Which aspect of DPK needs to be changed the most: the 3 most common answers across the years- they are 1) PreK Site placement process, 2) Transportation and 3) Availability of before and after care.</li> <li>Kindergarten preparedness. This question is asked in two different ways- the first way is “as a result of participating in DPK I feel my child is more prepared for kindergarten” and the second way is “on a scale of one to five how prepared is your child for kindergarten as of today?” Both of these questions have overall high agreement rates and parents feel their child is prepared for kindergarten.</li> <li>A slide with quotes from families about the impact of DPK was shared.</li> <li>Katherine Brandt clarified that we can send you as much information as you want that comes from the survey. There are a large number of questions on the survey.</li> <li>Families have consistently over several years stated that the placement process, transportation, and wrap care are the things that need to be improved is feedback that we take very seriously. We have worked to improve in these areas but have made the least amount of progress on the availability of transportation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Apprenticeship Program Updates</b></p> <p><b>Early Educator Academy updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Showed a video that highlighted the inaugural Early Educator Academy this summer- where we had 20 students in our first cohort. We received 150 applications for entrance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Academy offers the first Durham Technical Community College course and other certifications that are needed to enter the early education workforce. CPR/First Aid, IT SIDS, NC Foundations training and job shadowing at centers to see what a day in the life of an early educator looks like.</li> <li>The Academy was presented in a bilingual format- 19 of our 20 participants’ first language is Spanish.</li> <li>We hope this is a pathway to careers in the EC workforce.</li> <li>The Academy also worked with students to complete the criminal background check process and helped students navigate enrollment in Durham Tech courses for the Fall.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 8 of our participants received jobs in the field, 2 of them are now fully enrolled in the EC Apprenticeship program.</li> <li>○ Some of the participants would like to learn English before entering the field so we have helped them enroll in ESL classes and they plan to look for work in January 2026 after they complete the ESL course.</li> <li>● Apprenticeship Program Update- welcoming a new cohort of apprentices in October 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Thursday November 13<sup>th</sup> we will be at Durham Tech from 6-7pm</b> to welcome the new apprentices as well as celebrate the continuing apprentices. You are invited!</li> <li>○ Apprenticeship program now has 24 partnering employers</li> <li>○ Shout out to Cathy and the team at Durham Tech for the effort to make all of this possible.</li> <li>○ Cathy, because of the Apprenticeship program we have been able to hire a fulltime bilingual Instructor for the early education courses. We are seeing a positive impact from this program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● DCDEE has posted an RFA for a short early educators' academy model and Early Years will partner with Durham Tech to apply to expand the Academy based upon the success of the first one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cathy, Durham Tech is applying to do the same model and will keep you all posted on if we are approved for a grant. It is a quick turn-round so we should know by the November meeting if we are approved. If that grant doesn't come through, we are actively pursuing other avenues to get money to support this because we see the positive impact on the community.</li> <li>○ We are committed to the 6-week program vs the 2-week program. For Durham's needs we feel like it is important to have the longer option for greater work preparedness.</li> <li>○ Alex, What is the grant paying for? Are the students paying to participate in this program?</li> <li>○ Cathy, This is a completely no cost Academy to our students.</li> <li>○ Debbie, Is the ultimate goal to increase the pipeline of licensed certified teachers and IAs serving children in the population of our children in the bilingual community?</li> <li>○ Cathy, Yes that is one of the first conversations we have with them when they join the program. Start with this class then you do a certificate and then you complete your associates degree and then keep going to get your bachelor's degree- here are all of your career opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>DPK Governance Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have a few members rolling off the Governance Committee and typically we have new members start in November or January.</li> <li>● We are looking to enroll new members as a parent representative, community partner/Business leader and a director of an early education site.</li> </ul>

<b>Extended meeting in 2026</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the last few years, we have held a longer Governance Committee meeting in January.</li> <li>• In our November meeting we will talk about appropriate budget advocacy activities we may want to consider for the 2026 – 2027 fiscal year.</li> <li>• Discussion agreed to hold the January 15, 2026, meeting in person at the Jim and Carolyn Hunt Early Childhood Resource Center, 1201 South Briggs Ave from 9:30 – 12:30. Boxed lunches will be available at the end of the meeting for your convenience.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In school year 2025 – 2026, we meet the third Thursday of every month from 9:30 – 11:30. All virtual meetings are live streamed on the DPK YouTube Channel.</li> <li>• Upcoming meetings for School year 2025-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ November 20, 2025</li> <li>○ January 15, 2026 (In-person, 9:30 – 12:30)</li> <li>○ March 19, 2026</li> <li>○ May 21, 2026</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Adjournments</b>	<p>Meeting adjourned at 11:30am; Dr. Aleksandra Holod motioned to adjourn, and Jason Rutherford seconded the motion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All approved</li> </ul>

**\* Agenda items with handouts**